

NORTH COUNTY LAND TRUST



**Annual
Review
2018 – 2019**

Looking Forward...

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Reader,

Recently we've been hearing about the perils facing our natural world. From blazing fires in the Amazon, to insurmountable amounts of plastic waste imperiling our oceans, there are times when looking to the future feels overwhelming. However, from where I sit, leading a small regional land conservation organization, the future is wide open with so many positive possibilities.

North central Massachusetts is well endowed with forests and hills, headwaters and lakes, farms and diverse communities. Whether or not we choose to admit it, impacts from global climate change are affecting us here and now. We must look across our political and organizational boundaries to develop new and innovative solutions to our shared problems. You will see in this review of the work NCLT has accomplished over the past year that our network of partners and helpers is extensive. This is a strategic effort on our part to maximize our impact by sharing resources, information, and capacity.

Looking to the future, and working locally to address global issues, we will continue to advocate for nature-based solutions like land conservation, local food systems, and outdoor recreation. Our work ensures that the land that sustains us all will remain available for that important work now and forever. I'm proud of the work our small team has accomplished over the past year. There's so much more to do. Please join us as we look forward, without apprehension, to build a region connected and sustained through conservation.

With appreciation,

Anna Wilkins
Executive Director



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Together with our partners and your help, we are making a difference!

These past two years have been momentous in the strides we've made in identifying vital natural resources, engaging our partners and acting on the opportunities that support land conservation in our region. We've partnered with neighboring local land trusts to protect a farm in Winchendon and a portion of Wekepeke Brook in Sterling. With our community partners in Fitchburg, we've acquired a key parcel of land abutting Rollstone Hill. We are working with the State, local land trusts and the Town of Templeton to conserve 500 acres on Norcross Hill. We are supporting efforts to protect a farm which spans 300 acres in Fitchburg, Ashby and Ashburnham.

Our public access conservation areas are well managed and maintained for welcoming outdoor activities and we've made progress on our goal to expand accessibility with the opening of a mobility friendly trail on our Underwood Road property in Hubbardston. Our environmental programs have engaged the community in nature hikes, learning opportunities and enjoyment of the natural world.

We were able to achieve these results because we have a team of dedicated and strong staff, advisors, and an active Board of Directors. We partner with community organizations, generous foundations and supporters who see the value we bring. Our devoted volunteers complement our efforts in getting our work done. As a regional land trust, collaboration is important to our mutual achievements.

We have embarked on a Strategic Conservation Plan to frame our focus areas for action and a longer term Strategic Plan for the organization. These documents will guide us in advancing our mission, sustaining our natural resources, and ensuring the longevity of the North County Land Trust.

I am honored to be a member of our team and I invite you to join us. Together, we achieve more. Together, we can sustain the landscape that provides fresh air & water, local farm products, climate resiliency and an active, healthy, and economically viable region.

We look forward to working with you to carry out our goals for north central Massachusetts. Thank you all for your generous support of the North County Land Trust.

Richelle M. Brown
President



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Land Protection

Lisa Adams,
Outreach and Engagement
Coordinator

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MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY

North County Land Trust, Inc. (NCLT) is a non-profit 501 (c) 3 regional land conservation organization founded in 1992. Our Mission is to conserve the farms, forests and landscapes that define the character of our region.

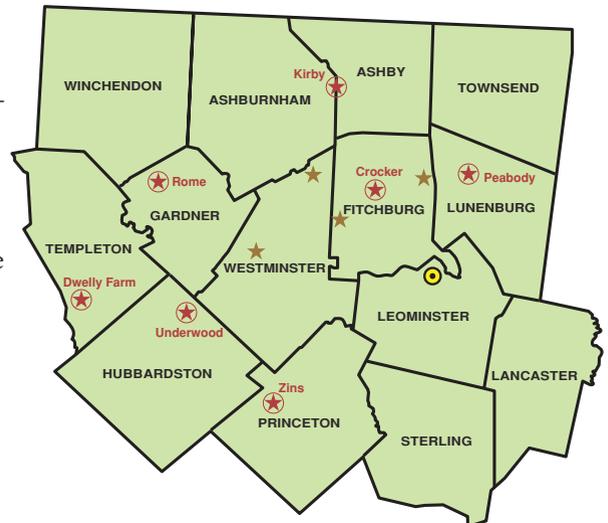
PROTECT: Identify natural resources, working lands and landscapes whose conservation is of the highest priority.

PRESERVE: Conserve land in perpetuity for future generations.

PROMOTE: Engage communities to understand and appreciate their natural environment and the importance of conservation.

Our Focus Area is Diverse

North County Land Trust works in the diverse communities of north central Massachusetts, to conserve land and water resources, farms, urban parks, working forests and scenic landscapes for the benefit of all. We tailor our conservation services to the needs of each community, from small urban centers to rural towns and bedroom communities.



Outreach is a Priority

NCLT works closely with stakeholders in the communities we serve, including landowners, municipal officials and community groups, to identify mutually beneficial land conservation goals. We connect ordinary citizens to the natural environment in their communities, through educational programs, nature hikes and other activities on our public access conservation areas.

Partnerships Leverage Resources for Conservation

NCLT collaborates with government agencies and other conservation organizations to leverage funding and other resources, resulting in the successful completion of projects as diverse as Gateway Park in Fitchburg and the protection of thousands of acres of public water supply land.



CREATING CONNECTIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS IN THE YEAR OF THE BRIDGES

by Jassy Bratko

For the Land Department this past Fiscal Year will be remembered as the Year of the Bridges! It has been a year when we not only built physical bridges to connect trails but metaphorical bridges to make connections within our community.

It began with a new bridge constructed last August by Eagle Scout Cameron Davis as we began our trail improvement plan following the recent timber harvest at the Rome Conservation Area in Gardner. In September fifty volunteers from the United Way Day of Caring helped restore old trails and clear new ones to create a looped multi-use trail system. Two more bridges were built in the following months to provide safe water crossings and complete the trail connections. Funds were provided from a grant from the Quabbin to Cardigan Partnership and a donation from Salvadore Auto in Gardner.

Dwelly Farm Conservation Area in Templeton benefitted from a team of 40 students and faculty from Cushing Academy who volunteered as part of their Tony Fisher Day of Service. They helped with the installation of a 40' bog bridge that connected the looped trail system; created the new Fisher Trail; brushed back existing trails and picked up rubbish on the roadside. Later this year another team of volunteers completed the tractor bridge that allows for maintenance of the conservation area fields. Both bridges were paid for with Templeton Community Preservation Funds. Special thanks go to Tom Bratko who designed and supervised the construction of all five of these bridges!

NCLT has always welcomed recreational use of all types and this year hoped to connect people with limited mobility to the joys of the outdoors. Robin Austin, NCLT's FY19 Terracorps member, partnered with North Quabbin Trails Association on her service project to develop our first trail that is accessible for an all-terrain wheelchair. Located at the Underwood Road Conservation Area in Hubbardston the trail was named The Wild Walk: A Wheelie Good Trail chosen in a naming competition by students from Hubbardston Center School. This new trail is also suitable for the very young, the elderly and many folks with limited mobility.





Kirby Conservation Area was the lucky recipient of our second Eagle Project of the year where Ryan Rivard, assisted by his team of scout volunteers, created a new trail that allows visitors to explore the highest point of the conservation area. It is Named Helen's High Way after Helen Kirby who donated the land to NCLT.

With all these trail improvements underway NCLT was fortunate to partner with the City of Leominster Recreation Department in their successful application for a Recreational Trails Grant! The grant of \$50,000 allowed both the City and the Land Trust to purchase a substantial inventory of tools ranging from handsaws to mowers and a trailer in which to transport and store them all!

Stewardship of our existing conservation land is just one small part of the Land Department's work. Of equal or greater importance is our work to conserve more land and this has been a year for building metaphorical bridges as we develop connections and partnerships that increase our capacity to do that work.

We have been fortunate to work with residents to create our newest conservation area on Quarry Lane in Fitchburg. This strategically located parcel will preserve an important connection to Rollstone Hill and allow us to further our mission of connecting people to the land by partnering with a local pre-school to help develop a nature-based program for its students.



LAND DEPT STATISTICS
Facilitated protection of 474 acres of land
1.53 Miles of new trails
650 volunteer hours
2 Eagle Scout Projects

We were proud to partner with MassWildlife and Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust in the Norcross Hill Conservation Project that will protect over 500 acres of land in Templeton including the new 465 Norcross Wildlife Management Area. This project was funded in part with a Landscape Partnership Grant. We also partnered with Mt. Grace in two workshops planned by Mt. Grace to inform landowners of options for land conservation.

Partnering with the Sterling Land Trust we were able to help conserve 8 acres along the Wekepeke Brook, one of the best cold-water streams in Massachusetts. Straddling the Sterling/Lancaster town this wooded marsh provides priority habitat for wildlife and is in the well head protection zone for Leominster.

Finally, throughout the winter we have worked with friends and partners from many different conservation organizations to develop our Strategic Land Conservation Plan which will guide our land conservation efforts into the future.

So much can be accomplished when you build bridges to create connections!

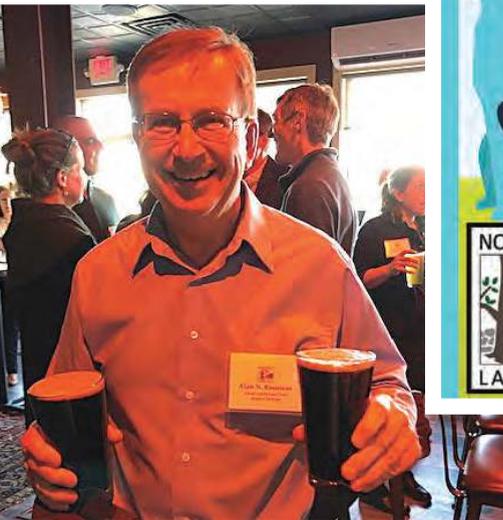




ENGAGING OUR NEIGHBORS

Hearing a barred owl call on a full moon night hike, witnessing a child first discovering the beauty of a caterpillar, seeing a scarlet tanager hidden in the forest trees – these are important reasons why we do what we do. We strive to show our community the value of our precious open land. It is through the generous support we receive from our members, cultural council grants and collaborating organizations that we can create valued, free educational programs for all ages.

If you have enjoyed one of our programs, or if you support these efforts, please become a member - and encourage your family and friends to join, too! You can be sure that NCLT will put your support to good use as we continue to raise awareness and conserve environmentally valuable parcels of land for our collective well-being. We have challenged ourselves to raise new members every month for the next year. Will you be one of them?



**Hey Pup!
Enjoy your hike?**

If so, ask your person
to become a
**North County
Land Trust
member!**

northcountylandtrust.org

**Support
our trails!**




ROBIN'S YEAR

Throughout my year I focused on 4 main projects: The 2019 Mass Open Space Conference, the Underwood Mobility Friendly Trail, Publicity, Events and Outreach, and Volunteer system design and recruitment.

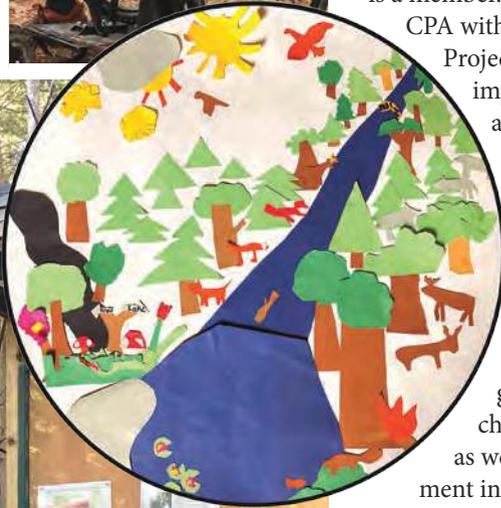
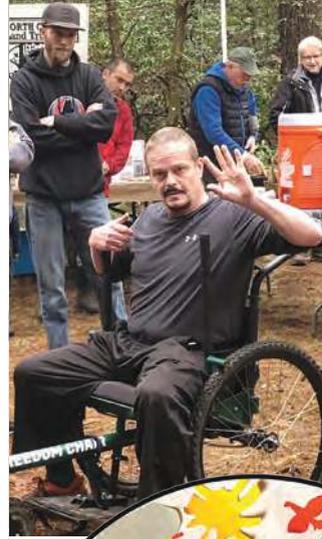


About 150 participants from across the state attended the 2019 MA Open Space Conference sponsored by the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership of which NCLT is a member. NCLT organized two sessions: a session on CPA with panelists speaking to a variety of Open Space Projects using CPA funding, and a session about the importance diversity when building an Open Space and Recreation Plan committee. Both sessions were well attended and received rave reviews.

The Underwood Mobility Friendly Project is a trail improvement project at the Underwood Conservation Area in Hubbardston, MA. North County Land Trust sought to improve the accessibility of our natural space to folks with a wider range of abilities. This project is geared toward anyone who uses rugged wheelchairs or who might be interested in using them, as well as those with braces, limited range of movement in their legs, or who look for frequent rest stops. In the spring of 2019, we completed a wide, level 1/3-mile trail.

Volunteers are critical to the success of NCLT Projects. Jassy has a great network of people who come out and help her do things like construct bridges, build new trails, and do most of the rest of the necessary stewardship on the trails. This year, we started a new program with Conservation Area Monitors. The idea is that we onboard Monitors for each conservation area, and they commit to walking the trails 1x/month and reporting back on trail conditions. This allows Jassy to be more efficient and to set up trail work when needed. It also allows Lisa to schedule events at conservation areas and be confident about the trail conditions.

Working on the monthly newsletter, Facebook and websites posts, I hoped to keep folks engaged in the work that NCLT was doing. I loved meeting people on our hosted walks such as the mushroom hikes, Wednesday Walks, and Owl Prowls. TerraCorps and NCLT are great organizations, and I found a lot of support for my projects. For anyone interested in getting involved with NCLT or TerraCorps, I recommend diving in! There is huge potential to learn at NCLT. I had a lot of fun working with the NCLT team and volunteers.



CONSERVATION CONVERSATIONS: NCLT'S REGIONAL STRATEGIC CONSERVATION PLAN

We envision a future that connects our communities through conservation—where physical, ecological, recreational and economic interconnections are embraced, enriching the unique character of each community. North County Land Trust (NCLT), Strategic Conservation Plan Vision Statement

On a chilly day in February, fifty of our region's conservation and land use professionals representing almost every town in NCLT's service area, regional and state agencies, and municipal board volunteers, gathered at the Leominster Public Library to discuss the priorities of each and identify opportunities for collaborated efforts. This was the second stakeholder meeting NCLT had organized as the beginning of a regional Strategic Conservation Planning effort, one that continues today.

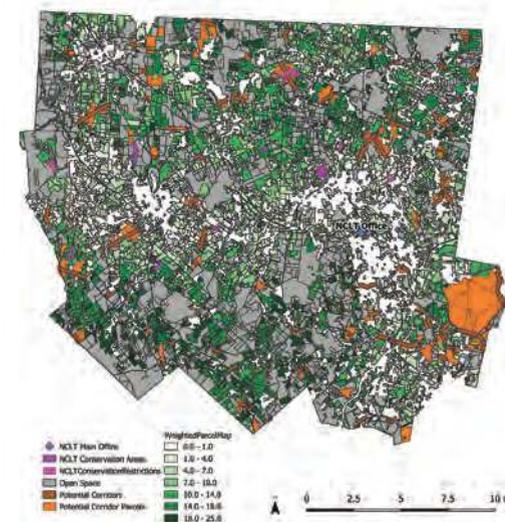
The significance of the role of land conservation in addressing a variety of issues from human health and well-being, to economic development, to climate change resilient communities is becoming more and more recognized. Strategic conservation planning (SCP) helps land trusts visualize a future for their communities and chart a course of action to realize that vision. We recognized the need for a SCP to identify priorities, partners, and tactic to achieve our goal of increasing land conservation in the region using the resources available to us.

In working on the plan so far, we have identified our land conservation vision, gathered vital information about the communities we serve (through existing municipal plans, stakeholder meetings, and other relevant reports), and reviewed and revised our project selection criteria.

The Conway School of Landscape Design took on our project for winter 2019 and completed an analysis of our region using the latest GIS mapping technology. Together we developed a weighted scoring system for the data based on values extracted from our community stakeholder meetings (trail connectivity, ecological connectivity, farms, and water protection). We included analysis on conservation opportunities in our region's Environmental Justice (EJ)-designated communities defined as either low-income, racial minority, and/or immigrant populations. Through this process we are exploring how to serve all communities—urban and rural, marginalized and well-represented—in conservation planning.

Successful land conservation projects and planning depend on relationship building and good communication. Through conversations about the role of conservation land as a part of the solution to systemic problems, we seek to break down the silos between human health, economic development, food systems, and environmental health to show that all of the systemic problems we face can only be truly solved if we come together and work on the system as a whole.

Through a generous grant from The Community Foundation of north central Massachusetts and other private funders for 2020, we are looking forward to completing the plan and connecting our communities through conservation.



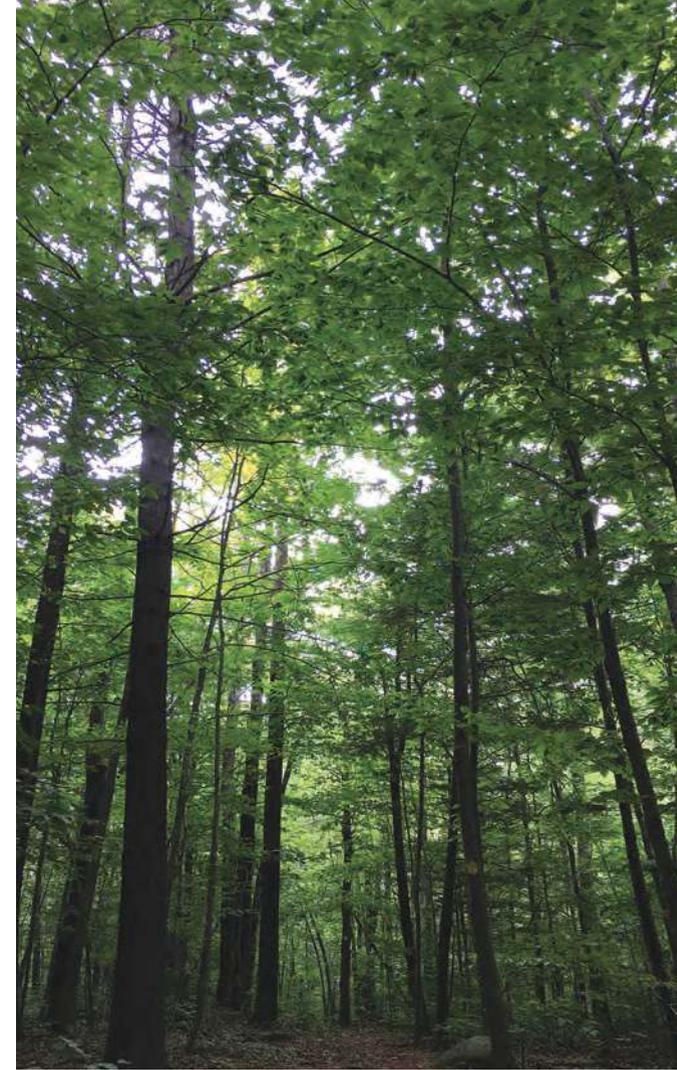
FRIENDS OF NCLT MAKE HISTORIC GIFT

In the fall of 2018, long-time friends of NCLT made the largest unrestricted donation in NCLT's history. Martha Crocker and Tom Leonard were compelled by NCLT's vision for the future of land conservation in north central Massachusetts. Having grown up in the area, Martha knew she wanted her gift to have a lasting effect on this place she loved. In addition, she knows how globally significant the forested landscape of New England is in combating the effects of climate change. Investing *now*, in land preservation *here*, has global implications while benefitting the local communities. "I look at this as an investment in everyone's future," she said.

With this generous donation the NCLT directors have created three long-term funds – land acquisition, stewardship and legal defense, and board discretionary. These new funds give us the flexibility to think more boldly about how to do our work better. For us that means, investing in dedicated and professional staff, building relationships, planning for climate change resiliency, and accessing effective technology.

NCLT is a partner and catalyst for land conservation in our region. We are also looking beyond that to support the long-term stewardship of open space. As a strong regional conservation partner, we will be able to help support the efforts of towns and other small conservation organizations in the region fulfill their duties and obligations for decades to come.

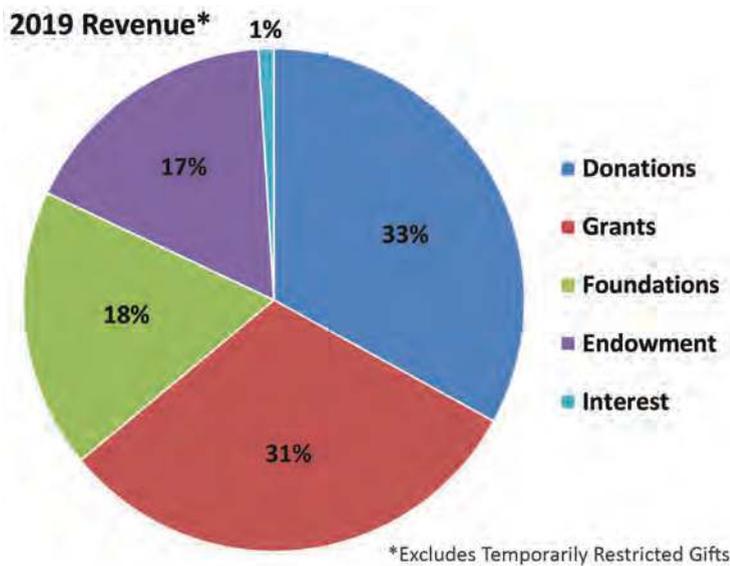
Land donors, members, and volunteers understand that when we are successful everyone benefits. We are so thankful to Martha and Tom, and all of those who support our work in this very special place on the planet.



INCOME STATEMENT- FISCAL YEAR 2019

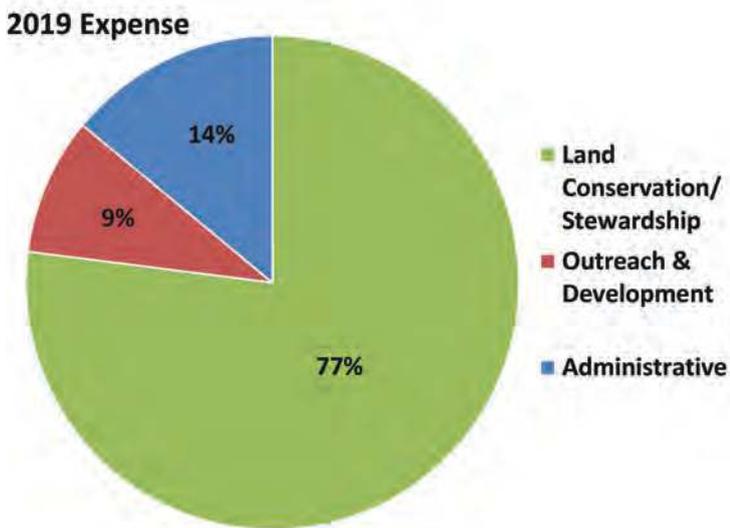
Revenue - Fiscal Year 2019

Memberships/Donations	55,954
Grants	52,983
Foundations	30,000
Endowment	28,000
Interest	2,184
Sub-total	169,121
Temp Restricted Gifts	240,000
Total Revenue	409,121



Expense- Fiscal Year 2019

Land Conservation/Stewardship	135,905
Outreach & Development	15,003
Administrative	23,936
Total Expenses	174,845
Net income	234,277



THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Individual Contributors

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of North Central Massachusetts
Douglas and Isabelle
Crocker Foundation
Rollstone Bank Charitable Fund

In Memory Of

Carolyn Crocker Winslow
Helen Kirby
Don Cosgrove

Think Globally, Act Locally



A business sponsorship of North County Land Trust looks good for your company. We've helped to protect over 5,000 acres of farms, forests, and waters in North Central Mass and we maintain miles of hiking trails throughout the region. Our success boosts your success as we protect quality of life for all.

Let's grow together.



www.NorthCountyLandTrust.org

For more information, contact Lisa Adams, 978-466-3900 or
ladams@northcountylandtrust.org

Corporate Volunteer Trail Projects; Project, Conservation Area, or Event Sponsorship Opportunities

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North County Land Trust, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization.

You can make a lasting difference in land conservation.

Please consider us in your estate planning and charitable giving. EIN#22-3193109

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